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By EDWIN D. MEAD.

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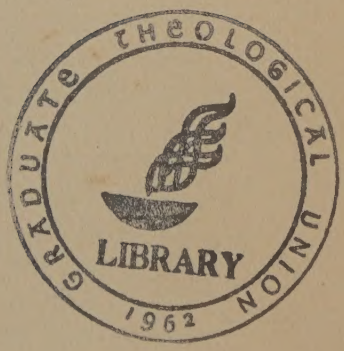

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THE KING ALFRED MILLENNIAL.

It was an honor and a great pleasure to be present, as the representative of the American Antiquarian Society, at the celebration of the King Alfred millennial at Winchester last September. To all men of English blood, any commemoration of Alfred has high significance. As we call Washington the father of his country, so we may properly call Alfred the father of the English race and of English political institutions. "Alfred," said Sir Walter Besant, speaking at the meeting held in Winchester to arrange for the Commemoration, "is and will always remain the typical man of our race — call him Anglo-Saxon, call him American, call him Englishman, call him Australian — the typical man of our race at his best and noblest. I like to think that the face of the Anglo-Saxon at his best and noblest is the face of Alfred. I am quite sure that the mind of the Anglo-Saxon at his best and noblest is the mind of Alfred; that the aspirations, the hopes, the standards of the Anglo-Saxon at his best and noblest are the aspirations, the hopes, the standards of Alfred. When our monument takes shape and form, let it somehow recognize this great, this cardinal fact. Let it show somehow by the example of Alfred the Anglo-Saxon at his best and noblest — here within the circle of the narrow seas, or across the ocean; wherever King Alfred's language is spoken; wherever King Alfred's laws prevail; into whatever fair lands of the wide world King Alfred's descendants have penetrated."

The commemoration at Winchester last autumn was, as all very well know, of the millennial of the death of Alfred.

As a matter of fact, there is some doubt as to whether 1901 was the true millennial year. There is controversy as to whether Alfred did not die a year or two before 901, or a year or two after. As to the year of his birth the authorities seem to be agreed. He was born at Wantage, in Berkshire, in 849. On the twenty-fifth of October, 1849, a public meeting was held in the town of Wantage to celebrate the millennial of his birth. Twenty thousand people gathered for that celebration. A select number of one hundred persons dined together on that day at the Alfred's Head near Wantage, and declared to the world that the name of Alfred, who on that spot first saw the light, should not be forgotten. This meeting was attended, we read, "by guests from every part of England and from America, that hopeful mother of future Anglo-Saxons, as well as from Germany, that ancient cradle of our common race"; and it was then and there resolved "that a Jubilee Edition of the works of King Alfred the Great, with copious literary, historical and pictorial illustrations, should be immediately undertaken, to be edited by the most competent Anglo-Saxon scholars who might be willing to combine for such a purpose." Various learned societies had repeatedly before this taken into consideration such a plan; a few of the leading scholars in Anglo-Saxon history and literature had had intentions in this direction; and transcripts of several of Alfred's works had been made by certain persons, and were actually almost ready for the press. Under the impulse given by the millennial celebration at Wantage, these various forces and ambitions were united and organized; and the fine edition of the complete works of Alfred, in two volumes, published a few years later, was the result.

The only place where I have happened to find any important reference to this celebration of the millenary of King Alfred's birth is, of all places in the world, Martin Farquhar Tupper's autobiography—which altogether is a more useful and a more interesting volume than some of you

might guess. Tupper had some admirable enthusiasms; and one of the noblest was that for Alfred the Great. He tells us that the movement for the celebration at Wantage was undertaken by Mr. Evelyn, the brothers Brereton, Dr. Giles, and himself; and I suspect that no one worked harder for it than he. Meetings and banquets to promote the celebration were held in several places, a notable one at Liverpool: and a commemorative medal was struck. I think that Dr. Giles, one of the best of the English Alfred scholars, lived at Liverpool; and Tupper tells us that the printing of the Jubilee Edition of Alfred's works was begun, about the time of the celebration, at Dr. Giles's private printing-press. Few magnates responded to the invitation to Wantage, we are told; but the common people evidently came gladly and in large numbers. There were several Americans—in particular, one Richardson, a literary man, whoever he may have been. Perhaps the said Richardson wrote an account of the affair; and some member of the American Antiquarian Society may discover it before our next meeting. "My Anglo-Saxon Magazine," says Tupper, "came out strong on the occasion — but is now obsolete." He prints a hymn which he composed for the occasion, "Today is the day of a thousand years," which is much better than most such occasional hymns; and the translations which he prepared for the Jubilee Edition of Alfred's poetical version of Boethius are surely something to be grateful for.

We spent a delightful day in and about Wantage last June. The famous old town, as every reader of "Tom Brown at Rugby" will remember, is in the Vale of the White Horse, in Berkshire, only some twenty miles southwest of Oxford. Uffington, the place where Thomas Hughes was born, and which he loved so warmly all his life, is not many miles away. It was there that we left the train to drive to the top of Ashdown hill, upon whose northern slope the great white horse is cut — probably was cut in Alfred's time, as a memorial of his Ashdown victory. One sees it

plainly from the train for many miles, as one rides through the beautiful broad valley, from Didcot to Swindon. It is, perhaps, half a dozen miles south of Uffington station; and on the way one passes the hill on the top of which St. George slew the dragon—whose blood has kept the grass from growing on the top of the hill ever since. The slope of Ashdown hill is very steep, and as one clambers up one passes directly beside the great figure of the horse, cut in the chalk and periodically "scoured." The view from the hill is magnificent. The earth-works on the summit are very extensive; and in the British Museum you can read the controversies about their origin. On the hill you will choose to believe that the Danes held them at the beginning of the battle, and the Saxons at the end. You will be told that the old road along the top of the ridge is a Roman road; and as you drive over a section of it on your way to Wantage, the story will help, along with the analysis of the Athanasian creed and of the former and latter prices of clothes by your driver from the Uffington tap-room, to make your drive interesting. The famous "blowing stone," which legend connects with Alfred, beside the road at the foot of the hill, sometime before you reach Wantage, also helps.

Wantage itself, when you come to it, is much like a hundred other English market towns. To me all English towns are interesting; but there are many more beautiful and interesting English towns than Wantage. The market-place is the centre of things; and in the centre of the market-place is a colossal statue of King Alfred. It is not a work of art, like Thornycroft's great work at Winchester; but it is sturdy and impressive—although not so impressive as the inscription, which we thought so good that I copy it here.

"Alfred found learning dead,
And he restored it;
Education neglected,
And he revived it;
The laws powerless,
And he gave them force;

The Church debased,
And he raised it;
The land ravaged by a fearful enemy,
From which he delivered it."

Wantage is known not only as the birthplace of Alfred the Great, but also of Bishop Butler. The fact that the great bishop was born there is not, however, so notorious in Wantage itself today as the fact that Richard Croker lives there; for our Tammany "boss" has chosen Wantage for his English home; and he and his house and his horses and his bull-dogs have prominent place in the photographer's shop where you buy your Alfred pictures.

Near the market-place is the beautiful parish church; and beside the churchyard is the vicarage. The vicar, Rev. Canon Archer Houblon, whom I found most courteous and helpful, is an enthusiast concerning Wantage, where he was born in 1849, the year of the Alfred millennial at Wantage. From him I learned of the little book on "Wantage Past and Present," which was prepared by Miss Agnes Gibbons and Mr. E. C. Davey, and which was published before I came home from England. It is such an excellent book, with its many illustrations, that I want to commend it to all who may be interested in Wantage and King Alfred. It was supplied to subscribers at five shillings; and Canon Houblon received orders. To most of us the chapter on the Anglo-Saxon period is the most interesting; and here one may read the evidence as to the exact spot in the outskirts of the town where stood the "royal villa" in which Alfred was born.

It is not possible here to say much about the various places in England associated with Alfred; nor, indeed, does my specific task impose it. Alfred Austin, the present poet laureate—who also wrote a drama concerning Alfred, with a really excellent historical introduction—wrote a little poem upon Alfred a few years ago, the last verse of which contains so good a geographical lesson relating to Alfred

that I commended it to our boys and girls at the Old South to learn by heart.

> "But with his name four other names attune,
> Which from oblivion guardian song may save:
> Lone Athelney, victorious Ethandune,
> Wantage his cradle, Winchester his grave."

Athelney, Ethandune, Wantage and Winchester are the four important Alfred places. Winchester, Athelney and Shaftesbury are the places where the great king's famous abbeys were founded; and about these abbeys there is a special book, by J. Charles Wall, published a year or two ago. As to just where "victorious Ethandune" was there is considerable controversy. The common notion has been that it was the present Edington, near Westbury, in Wiltshire; but Rev. Charles W. Whistler has recently published a critical pamphlet, which I have, arguing that it was another Edington, about half way between Athelney and Wedmore, where the peace was concluded. Bishop Clifford also, as appears below, inclined to this opinion. I did not visit Athelney; but during the week of the Winchester celebration I cut from one of the London newspapers an account of it, which I found so interesting that I incorporate it.

"Few historic spots are better known to us by name than the Isle of Athelney; and certainly there were few things that had more attraction for us when we first began to listen to the early pages of our rough island story than the tale of Alfred and the cakes. With the career of the great king, with his indomitable courage, his long struggle against the Danes, his care of the navy, his love of learning and of song, the writings of Pauli, of Freeman, and of Green have made us all familiar. But what we remember best is the record of that terrible winter when the fate of England was trembling in the balance, when the king, hard pressed by swarming enemies, fell back for a brief breathing-space to the heart of the Somersetshire marshes. We are too apt to think of him as a solitary fugitive. But although those who were with him in his retreat were few, his army was at no great distance; and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle expressly says that he was able to make frequent attacks upon the Danes. 'It was only later legend,' says Green, in speaking of King Alfred's gallant stand, 'that changed it into a solitary flight, as it turned the three months of Alfred's stay into three years of hiding. The three

months were, in fact, months of active preparation for a new struggle.'

"The scene of the King's retirement is one of the spots about whose identity there is no dispute. We may stand today upon the very ground where Alfred built his fortress — an insignificant rising in the vast green plain that stretches so far across the heart of Somerset, hardly to be noticed in the wide expanse of moor. But the ten centuries have changed the face of things altogether. This is not the Athelney that Alfred knew. In his time, as we learn from his friend and biographer, Asser, the island was surrounded by vast peat-bogs, crossed only by paths known to none but to the moor-men, by forests of alder-trees, the haunt of the red-deer and the roebuck, while beyond all lay wide sheets of shallow water. The meres have long been drained. The peat is there still, but the bogs are gone. Gone, too, are the red-deer and the roebuck; and in the rich meadows that fringe the slow moving moorland streams whose meeting-place is a mile distant from the island is some of the best grazing-ground in England. The Isle of Athelney of our times consists of rather more than twenty acres of ground, divided by a slight hollow into nearly equal parts. On the top of the eastern half stands the monument, a stumpy and inconspicuous obelisk, that was set up just a hundred years since to commemorate Alfred's deliverance from his enemies. On the slight slope below it is a farm which occupies, it is believed, the very spot where, ten years after Guthrum's overthrow, the King established a monastery as a mark of gratitude for his victory, and in fulfilment, so the legend says, of a vow that he had made after St. Cuthbert had appeared to him in a vision and assured him of his coming triumph. Athelney, as has been well observed, was endeared to the King by many memories. It had afforded him shelter in his dark hour. It was here that he saw the comforting vision of St. Cuthbert. Here he divided his one loaf with the beggar. From here he went out alone to reconnoitre the hostile camp, venturing boldly among the armed warriors, who gathered round the wandering minstrel,

> Unconscious of the coming fight,
> When that skilled hand, that swept so light
> The harp-strings, would with sterner grasp
> The shaft of vengeful war-axe clasp.

Here, too, were spoilt those famous cakes, the smell of whose burning has lasted for a thousand years. There is nothing improbable, by the way, in the cake story; and the men of the West Country note with pleasure that some high authorities, at any rate, no longer regard it as an idle tale.

"Of the monastery itself not one stone is left standing on another. In 1674, when some of the ruins were still to be seen, and were being cleared away, the foundations of the abbey church

were discovered, and the workmen found, with other relics, a golden spur. A century later a vault was found, some sixty yards from the present farmhouse, and parts of what may have been an oratory. Encaustic tiles have frequently been ploughed up on the spot, and these, together with a few fragments of carved stone, a coin or two, and a leaden water-bottle, lost here perhaps by some pilgrim, are all that remain of what, to judge from the descriptions of those who saw it in its prime, must have been one of the most beautiful, though at the same time, as was to be expected from the limited area of the site, far from being one of the largest monasteries in the county. Of its history Mr. Hugo collected some very curious details which, however, present no striking features. One interesting point is that the Abbot, like others of his rank in the county, was fined by Henry VII. for having 'aided and comforted' the Cornish rebels in their march across Somersetshire.

"The famous jewel, often said to have been found at Athelney, was dug up in 1693, not here, but at Newton Park, more than three miles west-north-west of the island; but there can be little doubt that it really is a relic of the monastery. It is of gold, shaped something like the head of a tennis-racquet, about two and a half inches long, nearly an inch and a quarter broad, and not quite half an inch thick. In front is an oval plate of rock-crystal a tenth of an inch thick, through which is seen the figure of a man holding a fleur-de-lys in each hand. The figure and the space surrounding it are covered with coloured enamel, red, blue, and green. Round the edge of the jewel is the legend, in Saxon characters: AELFRED . MEC . HEHT . GEWERCAN ('Alfred had me made'). The lower part of the gem forms a tube, in which a gold rivet is still visible. This tube, no doubt, once held a slender stem of wood or ivory; and the late Bishop Clifford's suggestion is probably the right one, that the whole was a pointer for a reader or a precentor, and that it was presented to the abbey by King Alfred himself.

"The site of the battle at Ethandune, in which Alfred broke for a time the power of the Danes, and the position of the fortress where Guthrum still held out for a fortnight after his defeat, are to some extent matters in dispute. It is true that most authorities seem inclined to identify Edington in Wiltshire with the place of battle. But Bishop Clifford considered that there was good evidence that the fight took place not in the neighbouring county, but in Somersetshire itself, at another Edington, on the Polden Hills, seven miles north of Athelney. Three miles to the east of the island, built, like all the moorland villages, on a slight rising in the great plain, so as to be out of the way of the winter floods, is Aller — Oller, as the people call it — in whose little church may still be seen what is believed to be the very font in which were baptised the heathen leader and thirty of his captains. Wedmore,

the scene of the 'chrism-loosing,' and the place where was signed one of the most memorable treaties in our history, is twelve miles north of Aller. It was at Wedmore, in the summer-palace whose massy foundations were brought to light some years since, on the thousandth anniversary of the signing of the peace, that the English King entertained his humbled antagonist. That Somersetshire should have been chosen for the site of a royal palace is not surprising. The Mendip Hills, from whose southern verge Wedmore is but four miles as the crow flies, were a favorite hunting-ground of the Saxon Kings. In the little town of Axbridge is still preserved a copy of an ancient manuscript which records how King Edmund was nearly carried over the edge of the Cheddar Cliffs by a runaway horse while hunting in the Mendip Forest; and the same document mentions that Athelstan, Edred, Edgar and the sainted Edward were accustomed to come down here in the summer to follow the red-deer among the hills.

"The ancient setting of the Isle of Athelney has long since disappeared. No trace of Alfred's fortress or of the abbey that occupied its site is left. But there is no change in the everlasting hills. The forest, it is true, is gone. But the parish boundaries, the very fields, some even of the old cart tracks, are much as they were in that memorable winter a thousand years since, when the greatest of the Saxon Kings sought shelter in the Somersetshire marshes."

The millennial naturally gave birth to much new Alfred literature in England. Perhaps the most useful book was that entitled, "Alfred the Great," edited by Mr. Alfred Bowker, the mayor of Winchester and secretary of the committee on the commemoration, issued some time before that event, with a view to diffusing public knowledge of the king's life and work. There is a preface by Mr. Bowker; a general introduction by Sir Walter Besant, which is in substance the address delivered by him in the Guildhall of Winchester at the first public meeting held in Winchester in behalf of the commemoration; and this is followed by a series of special essays on the various aspects of Alfred's life and work: "Alfred as King," by Frederic Harrison; "Alfred as a Religious Man and an Educationalist," by the Bishop of Bristol; "Alfred as a Warrior," by Charles Oman; "Alfred as a Geographer," by Sir Clements Markham; "Alfred as a Writer," by Professor John Earle; "English

Law before the Norman Conquest," by Sir Frederick Pollock; and "Alfred and the Arts," by Rev. W. J. Loftie. In the new volume of American Addresses, by Frederic Harrison, are included his valuable general paper upon Alfred and his special study of Alfred's writings. Mr. W. J. Sedgefield, of Cambridge University, has published a new translation of King Alfred's version of the Consolations of Boethius; new editions of the various chronicles concerning Alfred have been prepared; and half a dozen new popular biographies have appeared. The London School Board arranged Alfred celebrations in all the London schools; and the handbooks prepared in this connection, and in various other connections, are admirable. In the British Museum there was a superb exhibition, for several weeks, of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and other material illustrating the Alfred period; and in the Museum at midsummer there was a great meeting, presided over by our American minister, Mr. Choate, at which Frederic Harrison gave the same address upon Alfred which he had given several times in America the previous spring and which, taking Mr. Fiske's place, he gave at Winchester in September.

It is about Winchester, of course, that the memories of the great king chiefly cluster; and Winchester was the centre of interest in the millennial year. "It seems unnecessary to urge," wrote Sir Walter Besant, "that a monument to Alfred must be set up in Winchester, and not in London or in Westminster or anywhere else. Here lies the dust of the kings, his ancestors, and of the kings, his successors. Thirty-five of his line made Winchester their capital; twenty were buried in the cathedral. In this city Alfred received instruction from St. Swithin. The city was already old and venerable when Alfred was a boy. He was buried first in the cathedral, and afterwards in the abbey, which he himself founded, hard by. The name of Alfred's country, well-nigh forgotten except by scholars, has been revived of late years by a Wessex man, Thomas Hardy. But the name of

Alfred's capital continues in the venerable and historic city of Winchester, which yields to none in England for the monuments and the memories of the past."

Winchester was fortunate in having as its mayor at this millennial time, in the person of Mr. Alfred Bowker, one who, although a young man, is peculiarly proud of the monuments and memories of Winchester, thoroughly alive to their significance, a warm lover of Alfred the Great, a man with genuine antiquarian interests and true historical feeling, of high public spirit and a winning personality, zealously devoted to the larger interests of his ancient city, and an indefatigable worker. I have spoken of the book on Alfred which he edited. He was from the beginning the secretary of the committee on the commemoration, and its real executive. He worked untiringly and most intelligently for three years to make the commemoration what it ought to be; and its success was due to him far more than to any other. If any other name is to be coupled with his, it should be that of Frederic Harrison.

Winchester is one of the most beautiful and attractive as well as one of the most historic of the cathedral cities of England. Canterbury alone among the cathedrals has more of English history built into it than the great minster in Alfred's city. Lincoln, rising among the old homes of the Pilgrims and Puritans, is perhaps more interesting to the New Englander; but no other of the cathedrals is to him so eloquent in its speech of the past. Few others are architecturally more noble; and the great nave especially, the work of Wykeham, is unsurpassed.

Our first visit to Winchester was not in the week of the millennial. We had been there also in the June days, when the English country is at its greenest and most beautiful. We came by the way of the Surrey hills and villages and by Selborne, where Gilbert White lived out and wrote out his "Natural History." Winchester lies in the very midst of Hampshire, whose capital it is, surrounded by well wooded

hills,— although they were far better wooded in Alfred's time than in ours. The little river Itchen winds through the town now as it did then. It is one of the streams in which Izaak Walton loved to fish. He is buried in the cathedral, as is Jane Austen, whose modest little home is still pointed out in a narrow street near by; and their simple memorials draw quite as many pilgrims as the great tombs of the cardinals and kings. Four or five miles only from Winchester is Hursley, with its beautiful parish church, venerated by churchmen as the scene of the labors of Keble, who sleeps beside it.

But all of these fair pictures, with the great school —which ranks with Eton and Harrow and Rugby— the city cross, and almost all besides that makes Winchester so attractive to us, we must brush away when we think of Alfred's city. That was a much smaller city, a walled city, with little in it like what is in Winchester today, save the courses of the High street and a few other of the principal streets. The cathedral then, as now, was the central feature; but it was not the noble structure which we know, but a church of simple architecture, built up again from the ruins of that which the Danes had destroyed a century before. St. Swithin, who had been Alfred's tutor and was Winchester's patron saint, was buried outside of the cathedral, and his grave drew pilgrims to the city. Of the cathedral that Alfred restored nothing remains. In the crypt can still be seen the foundations of the Saxon church and the British well that must have supplied the monks with water. The remains of the Roman wall may also be seen in the close. About the cathedral in Alfred's time clustered the monastic buildings; and immediately north of it was the New Minster which he planned and built, mainly as a school for the better education of the sons of the nobles. Not far off, doubtless in what is still known as the Abbey Grounds, was a convent for nuns, which Elaswitha united with her husband in founding. William of Wykeham's College, founded in

Winchester four centuries later on, may be viewed as in some sort a continuation of Alfred's New Minster school. Alfred, his queen and his son were all buried in the New Minster. It proved that the New Minster was built too near the cathedral, and when the latter was rebuilt on a larger scale in the twelfth century, the New Minster was taken down and rebuilt outside of the gates, as Hyde Abbey,—and thither the coffins were moved. The abbey was destroyed at the time of the Reformation. In digging among the foundations afterwards, three coffins were discovered buried before what had once been the high altar. Strangely, no effort seems to have been made to preserve or identify them. They were broken up, and the lead was sold for two guineas; and no one knows today what has become of Alfred's bones. Only a few scattered stones and the wall of a rude barn show what was once Hyde Abbey; but — thanks also largely to the zealous young mayor — the poor buildings which cover the old abbey grounds are presently to be removed, and Winchester is to have there a worthy public park.

The centre of Alfred's life at Winchester was Wolvesey Castle, close to the cathedral. Often rebuilt and greatly changed, its ruins, the most extensive and impressive in Winchester, still remain on the old site, with the river flowing near them. Within the walls of Wolvesey Alfred held his court and did his great work, planning and carrying out, surrounded by Asser, Grimbald and the other learned men whom he gathered around him, his schemes for the reform and education of his people. Here probably he wrote the Saxon Chronicle, the beginning of the record of English civil history. Here he had the archives kept and a survey of the kingdom made; here the Latin translations were made and the books written; and here the artists, artisans, and scholars from all parts of England and the Continent, whom he drew into co-operation with him for the service of the people, found their welcome and their home. Venerable indeed are the ruins of Wolvesey Castle!

It was a great throng of people that gathered in the ancient city in the September days for the millennial observances; but there were few Americans among them. It would not have been a few had the commemoration been held at midsummer, as was first proposed. There were many representatives of our universities and learned societies then in England, who had been delegated to share in the celebration; but in September these were, for the most part, already back at their work at home. Charles Francis Adams was there, and Col. Higginson. Gen. Rockwell spoke at the banquet, representing Yale University. Prof. Freeman of the University of Wisconsin was present; and I saw Miss Ruth Putnam, the accomplished historical writer, and Mr. Lombard, so long the minister of the old Plymouth church. There were doubtless others, but these were all I noted.

But the man who was most sadly missed by all was an American. The principal address at the commemoration was to have been delivered by our own John Fiske. He was on the very point of sailing for England, with this participation in the Alfred commemoration as his chief object, when his untimely death occurred; and his place on the Guildhall platform was taken by Frederic Harrison. It was not Mr. Fiske's death alone which gave an element of sadness to the week at Winchester. Sir Walter Besant, who had been one of the most earnest promoters of the commemoration, and who would have had a conspicuous place in it, died in London at almost the same time that Mr. Fiske died here. Yet sadder and more shocking, making the week one of deep gloom, especially for Americans, the death of President McKinley occurred at the close of the very week before the commemoration; and on the very day of the banquet and the dedication of the statue, the memorial services were held in Westminster Abbey, shared in by the American minister and so many more who else would have been with us at Winchester. There was no meeting in that Alfred week at which our dead President and mourning nation were not

remembered — named and remembered, too, in such manner and with such feeling, let me not fail to say, as make the week's anxiety and sorrow almost forgotten in the memory of the deep and universal sympathy with America which found such strong and tender expression through every noble voice at Winchester and in all England.

The commemoration exercises occupied four days, Tuesday to Friday, September 17-20, culminating in the dedication of the statue, the Guildhall banquet and the cathedral service, on the last day. The previous days were largely occupied by visits to the places of chief historical interest in the city— the site of Hyde Abbey, the castle, the old west gate, Wolvesey, the college, the cathedral, *etc.*— under the guidance of those best qualified to interpret them to the visiting company ; and in connection with various of these visits there were luncheons, receptions and other courtesies. On one afternoon, in the old castle hall, whose history itself covers so large a part of a millennium, Henry Irving, standing beneath the old Round Table on the wall, which a courageous tradition associates with Arthur, read Tennyson's "Becket" to a great audience which thronged the hall. Another afternoon there was a lecture on the coinage of Alfred's time, by the president of the Numismatic Society. On one day there was a public luncheon, at which Col. Higginson made one of his inimitable speeches, touching with grace and wit upon the relations of English and American cousins, and expressing with delicate feeling the American gratitude for the English sympathy in our national sorrow. On one evening Frederic Harrison delivered in the Guildhall his address on King Alfred. On another evening, in the Guildhall, there was an exhibition of a series of tableaux planned and most skilfully presented by the young people of Winchester, illustrating the various chapters of Alfred's life — the boyhood, the battling, the hiding at Athelney, the episodes of the cakes and of the harp, the work of the scholar, the court of the king — the brightest of the tableaux

being the great hall itself and its gay company, full of brilliant ladies and of scholars and public functionaries in their red robes. Especially interesting to us was Mr. Hamo Thornycroft, the sculptor of the statue which was to be uncovered on the morrow, whom we here met for the first time, having a longer conversation with him afterwards, by his kind invitation, at his studio in Kensington. A striking figure he was, with his thick white hair and fine face; and his conversation revealed how closely and sympathetically he had studied many heroic men in English history besides Alfred the Great. Indeed it was he who sculptured the noble figure of Cromwell which now stands beside Westminster Hall, erected after the commotion in Parliament a few years ago, which will be remembered,— erected, it is said, almost entirely at the cost of Lord Rosebery, who made the speech at the uncovering of the Alfred statue at Winchester.

The dedication of the statue, on Friday, September 20, was the central feature of the commemoration. The day was beautiful, the whole city was gay with its decorations, the sidewalks were thronged with happy people, and the long High street, through which the procession moved from the castle on the hill to the broad place at the foot where the statue stands, was lined with citizen soldiers in their bright uniforms. The procession itself was brilliant and picturesque as no American civic procession is, so many of the academic men wearing their red silken gowns, and the Lord Mayors and other political grandees contributing by their gorgeous hereditary habiliments to an effect imposing indeed. The religious exercises beside the statue were simple. Almost all the time was occupied by Lord Rosebery's impressive address. Eloquent, fine and fitting it was, worthy of the occasion and of the memory of the great king whose services it set forth so sympathetically and sturdily. The character which it pictured was the same character as that symbolized by the heroic bronze figure which rose before

us when the curtain fell — the Christian Saxon king, with his sword held high aloft, its hilt making a cross. The statue meets all of Besant's high demands and definitions. It is a colossal figure, nearly twenty feet high, upon a rough granite base equally high, the whole rising so far above the pavement that, as one comes down the High street toward it, its upper background is the green hill above the low houses.

The banquet in the Guildhall followed almost immediately the dedication exercises. There were, perhaps, four hundred at the tables. There were lords and ladies, mayors and admirals, bishops and canons galore, and a score of scholars whose names are household words alike in London and in Boston. The galleries were filled with men and women who came to look on and to hear the speeches. There was music by the band of the Royal Marine Artillery, beginning with a march by Berlioz and the Tannhäuser overture. The toast list was a long one, beginning with "The King and the Royal Descendants of Alfred," and including such subjects as "Alfred and the Royal Navy," "Alfred and the English Civic and Municipal Life," and "Alfred and the Literature and Learning of the English-speaking Race"— each toast, according to the English usage, proposed as well as responded to in a set speech. The Mayor of Winchester presided, and among the speakers were the Bishop of Winchester, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, Lord Brassey and Lord Avebury. The toast to "The Anglo-Saxon Race" was responded to by our own General Rockwell in a straightforward, dignified and manly speech. The speeches as a whole, it must be said, were singularly destitute of lightness and brightness, Lord Rosebery's alone contributing a bit of humor to the occasion.

From the banqueting hall the company repaired to the cathedral for the special religious service. The great

minster was thronged, and the service was a beautiful and solemn one. The processional hymn was

"O God, our help in ages past";

and the sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury immediately followed. Then the national anthem was sung by the great congregation, and the service proceeded. In a special collect there was thankful remembrance of "him whom Thou didst raise up in ages past to be a singular pattern of virtue in our land, ALFRED, the righteous ruler, the valiant defender, the wise instructor of his people, the builder up of a great nation." The final hymn was

"For all the saints who from their labors rest";

and after this was sung the Hallelujah Chorus.

It is good for a nation, it is good for a race, to sing Hallelujahs to a character like that of Alfred the Great. "No people, in ancient or modern times," says Frederic Harrison, "ever had a hero-founder at once so truly historic, so venerable, and so supremely great. . . Alfred was the only perfect man of action recorded in history; for Aurelius was occasionally too much of the philosopher; Saint Louis usually too much of the saint; Godfrey too much of the crusader; the great emperors were not saints at all; and of all more modern heroes we know too much to pretend that they were perfect. . . . Of all the names in history there is only our English Alfred whose record is without stain and without weakness—who is equally amongst the greatest of men in genius, in magnanimity, in valor, in moral purity, in intellectual force, in practical wisdom and in beauty of soul. In his recorded career from infancy to death, we can find no single trait that is not noble and suggestive, nor a single act or word that can be counted as a flaw."

Indeed, all students of Alfred seem to be at one in the preëminent praise which they bestow and the preëminent place which they assign him among Englishmen. "Amidst

the deepest gloom of barbarism," wrote Gibbon, "the virtue of Antoninus, the learning and valor of Cæsar, and the legislative genius of Lycurgus shine forth united in that patriot king." Says Mr. Green in his History of the English People: "Alfred was the noblest as he was the most complete embodiment of all that is great, all that is lovable, in the English temper. He combined as no other man has ever combined its practical energy, its patient and enduring force, its profound sense of duty, the reserve and self-control that steadies in it a wide outlook and a restless daring, its temperance and fairness, its frank geniality, its sensitiveness to affection, its poetic tenderness, its deep and passionate religion." "The most perfect character in history," is Mr. Freeman's verdict, expressed in an eloquent passage in his History of the Norman Conquest; "a saint without superstition, a scholar without ostentation, a warrior all whose wars were fought in the defence of his country, a conqueror whose laurels were never stained by cruelty, a prince never cast down by adversity, never lifted up to insolence in the day of triumph — there is no other name in history to compare with his." He institutes careful comparisons with Saint Louis of France, with Charles the Great, and with the English Edward, all to the advantage of Alfred. "The virtue of Alfred," he says, "like the virtue of Washington, consisted in no marvellous displays of superhuman genius, but in the simple, straightforward discharge of the duty of the moment. But Washington, soldier, statesman and patriot like Alfred, has no claim to Alfred's further characters of saint and scholar. William the Silent, too, has nothing to set against Alfred's literary merits; and in his career, glorious as it is, there is an element of intrigue and chicanery utterly alien to the noble simplicity of both Alfred and Washington." The time would fail to add the accordant words of Thomas Hughes, of Giles, of Pauli, of Wordsworth and so many more. And these superlative tributes are not tributes which have accumulated about some myth-

ical Alfred. The lines of the portrait drawn at the beginning are the same. Florence of Worcester, writing in the century after Alfred's death, speaks of him as "that famous, warlike, victorious king, the zealous protector of widows, scholars, orphans and the poor, skilled in the Saxon poets, affable and liberal to all, endowed with prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance, most patient under the infirmity which he daily suffered, a most stern inquisitor in executing justice, vigilant and devoted in the service of God."

Alfred's various great services are recorded in the books and known to the reader of English history. He was the deliverer of Saxon England from the Danes. The long story of his humiliations and defeats is like the story of Washington's Jersey campaigns; Athelney was like Valley Forge; and the fortitude and patience of Alfred through it all were like the fortitude and patience of Washington. "What follows," to use the words of Besant, "is like a dream; or it is like the uprising of the French under Joan of Arc. There had been nine years of continuous defeat. The people had lost heart; they had apparently given in. Yet on the reappearance of their king they sprang to arms once more; they followed him with one consent, and in the first encounter with the Danes they inflicted upon them a defeat so crushing that they never rallied again. In one battle, on one field, the country was recovered."

Alfred was the founder of the English navy. He was the real founder of London as it was during the middle ages and as it is today. His code of laws stands out preëminent — laws based upon the laws of God and incorporating the Golden Rule. He desired universal education, and worked strenuously for it,— the education of the people, based not on Latin, but on English. "My desire is that all the freeborn youths of my people may persevere in learning until they can perfectly read the English Scriptures." He sought to bring his island people into touch with the general civil-

ization of Europe. He was the founder of English literature.

The little volume prepared by the English committee on the millennial and the flood of literature that has followed will do great service in directing attention anew to Alfred's many-sided activity and influence. It were to be wished that more attention might be given, however, to the edition of Alfred's writings which was the fruit of the celebration in 1849 of the millennial of his birth; for it is here, in his own writings, in his work for the culture of his people, that we come into closest touch with him and best perceive the real greatness of his mind.

We have in the two volumes of Alfred's writings the great king's Will, the various Charters which bear his signature, his version of the historian Orosius, his version of the Venerable Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," his version of Boethius's "Consolations of Philosophy," a portion of his version of Gregory's "Pastoral Care," his "Blossom Gatherings" from Saint Augustine, his Laws, and the preface to his version of Gregory's "Dialogues." A few other works have been ascribed to Alfred. Their authenticity is discussed by Professor Earle in his essay upon "King Alfred as a Writer" in the little volume edited by Mr. Bowker.

The work is almost entirely translation. But Alfred was the freest of translators. Sometimes, he tells us himself, he gives us word for word, sometimes meaning for meaning. Sometimes, too, he makes important interpellations, short and long, his author simply serving him as a text or point of departure; and he often omits sections which he thinks will not be of service to his people. At a time when learning was almost dead in England, he looked about for the things which would give his people the most valuable information and the best inspiration; and these things he translated into the language of the people, with the help of the best scholars whom he could summon, and

circulated by the best means which the conditions of the time made possible. We know that a copy of his translation of Gregory's "Pastoral Care" was sent to every bishop in England. On the whole, perhaps he could not have made a better selection for his purpose. A glance at the list will show that he gave to his people something in their own English history, something in general history, something in geography, in philosophy and in religion.

No general history of the world was so well known or so highly esteemed in the time of Alfred as that by Orosius. Indeed it continued to be held in high esteem down to the time of the invention of printing, being one of the first works that was selected for the press. Orosius was a learned Spanish priest, born in the latter part of the fourth century, the friend of Jerome and of Augustine. When Rome was captured and pillaged by Alaric the Goth, in 410, the Romans accused Christianity of being the cause of the affliction and ruin which had befallen the empire. It was to meet this charge that Augustine wrote his "City of God," which is really a philosophy of history, pointing out the increasing providential purpose which runs through the ages and the actual amelioration which had come through Christianity. At Augustine's request and to strengthen the argument, Orosius wrote his compendium of history, in the same spirit, covering human history from the beginnings down to his own time; and this is the work, occupying two hundred pages of one of our volumes, which Alfred translated into Anglo-Saxon.

The first chapter of this history is a general geographical survey of the world. Into this chapter Alfred inserts a description of Europe, all his own, which is one of the most important of his original writings, and perhaps the most important contribution made in his time to geographical science. "So far as his personal knowledge extended," says Sir Clements Markham, president of the Royal Geographical Society, "Alfred was a trained geographer. He

was also in a position to increase the information derived from his own personal experiences by diligently collecting materials from those foreigners who frequented his court, and by reading." His account of the voyages of Ohthere, a Norwegian of his time, around the North Cape, and Wulfstan in the Baltic Sea, and his general description of Europe or, as he calls it, Germania, are of unique value. The chapter containing these accounts has been added to our series of Old South Leaflets. The section of the Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England, translated by Alfred, which gives the account of Augustine's preaching of Christianity in England, is also printed in the same series.

The translation of Bede occupies more than two hundred pages of one of the volumes; and the translation of Boethius more than a hundred. Boethius lived a century after Orosius; and his "Consolations of Philosophy" was written in prison, where he had been most unjustly thrown to await execution, after a life of distinction and power. His noble nature offered much with which Alfred found kinship. The translation of his work was clearly a labor of love; and the many interpellations afford some of the most significant pieces of self-revelation which have come to us from Alfred's pen. The following brief chapter (xvii) is memorable on account of its closing words:

"When Wisdom had sung this lay, he was silent, and the mind then answered and thus said: O Reason, indeed thou knowest that covetousness, and the greatness of this earthly power, never well pleased me, nor did I very much yearn after this earthly authority. But nevertheless, I was desirous of materials for the work which I was commanded to perform; that was, that I might honourably and fitly guide and exercise the power which was committed to me. Moreover, thou knowest that no man can shew any skill, or exercise or control any power, without tools, and materials. That is of every craft the materials, without which man cannot exercise the craft. This, then, is a king's materials and his tools to reign with; that he have his land well peopled; he must have beadmen, and soldiers, and workmen. Thou knowest that without these tools no king can shew his craft. This is also his materials which he must have beside the tools; provision

for the three classes. This is, then, their provision; land to inhabit, and gifts, and weapons, and meat, and ale, and clothes, and whatsoever is necessary for the three classes. He cannot without these preserve the tools, nor without the tools accomplish any of those things which he is commanded to perform. Therefore I was desirous of materials wherewith to exercise the power, that my talents and fame should not be forgotten, and concealed. For every craft and every power soon becomes old, and is passed over in silence, if it be without wisdom. Because whatsoever is done through folly, no one can ever reckon for craft. This is now especially to be said; that I wished to live honourably whilst I lived, and after my life to leave to the men who were after me my memory in good works."

There exists a poetical as well as a prose version of Boethius, the versification clearly having been done after and from the prose. Both versions are ascribed to Alfred, although there is a question about the poetical one. You will be glad to hear one of these poems, closely rendered from the Anglo-Saxon by Mr. Tupper. Thirty of the poems are given in the first of our two volumes. This is upon "True Greatness," and its spirit and purpose almost make us think of Burns.

"All men and all women on earth
Had first their beginning the same;
Into this world of their birth
All of one couple they came.

"Alike are the great and the small;
No wonder that this should be thus;
For God is the Father of all,
The lord and the maker of us.

"He giveth light to the sun,
To the moon and the stars as they stand;
The soul and the flesh He made one,
When first He made man in the land.

"Well born alike are all folk
Whom He hath made under the sky;
Why then on others a yoke
Now will ye be lifting on high?

"And why be so causelessly proud,
As thus ye find none are illborn?
Or why, for your rank, from the crowd
Raise yourself up in such scorn?

"In the mind of a man, not his make,
In the earth-dweller's heart, not his rank,
Is the nobleness whereof I spake,
The true, and the free, and the frank.

"But he that to sin was in thrall,
Illdoing wherever he can,
Hath left the first lifespring of all,
His God, and his rank as a man;

"And so the Almighty down-hurl'd
The noble disgraced by his sin,
Thenceforth to be mean in the world,
And never more glory to win."

Of peculiar value is the preface which Alfred wrote to Gregory's "Pastoral Care," when he had copies of his translation of that work sent to all his bishops, to be kept in their minsters for the use of the people. Professor Earle says justly that "among the many precious evidences which time has spared for the perpetuation of a noble memory, the first place must certainly on the whole be accorded to this Preface." It is in the nature of an address to the bishops, recalling the better conditions of learning in England in past times, lamenting the existing decay, and making a noble plea for the education of the people, especially in their own English tongue, by giving them the best literature in good translations.

Much deserves to be said of Alfred's laws. The student will find it profitable to read the code, beginning with the Ten Commandments and gathering together the best laws inherited from early times and new ordinances of the king's own. True English conservatism speaks along with the spirit of progress, in the prologue:

"I, Alfred the king, gathered these laws together and ordered many to be written which our forefathers held, such as I approved, and many which I approved not I rejected, and had other ordinances enacted with the counsel of my Witan; for I dared not venture to set much of my own upon the statute-book, for I knew not what might be approved by those who should come after us. But such ordinances as I found, either in the time of my kinsman Ina, or of Offa, king of the Mercians, or of Ethelberht, who first

received baptism in England — such as seemed to me rightest I have collected here, and the rest I have let drop. I, then, Alfred, king of the West Saxons, showed these laws to all my Witan, and they then said that they all approved of them as proper to be holden."

We come into first-hand touch with Alfred in the old Saxon Chronicle and in the Life of Alfred by Asser, his friend and bishop, the authenticity of which is now generally conceded. It is in the Saxon Chronicle that we have the beautiful story of the boy Alfred prompted to learning by his mother. Some may like to hear the famous story of the cakes in the words in which Asser tells it:

"At the same time the above-named King Alfred, with a few of his nobles, and certain soldiers and vassals, used to lead an unquiet life among the woodlands of the county of Somerset, in great tribulation; for he had none of the necessaries of life, except what he could forage openly or stealthily, by frequent sallies, from the pagans, or even from the Christians who had submitted to the rule of the pagans; and as we read in the Life of St. Neot, at the house of one of his cowherds. But it happened on a certain day, that the countrywoman, wife of the cowherd, was preparing some loaves to bake, and the king, sitting at the hearth, made ready his bow and arrows and other warlike instruments. The unlucky woman espying the cakes burning at the fire, ran up to remove them, and rebuking the brave king, exclaimed:

'Ca'sn thee mind the ke-aks, man, an' doossen zee 'em burn?
I'm boun' thee's eat 'em vast enough, az zoon az 'tiz the turn.'[1]

The blundering woman little thought that it was King Alfred, who had fought so many battles against the pagans, and gained so many victories over them."

Perhaps the most careful and thorough of the biographies of Alfred is that by the German Pauli. He says in his preface that it "was written by a German for Germans." It was conceived when he was living at Oxford in 1848. That was a time when all thoughtful Germans were anxious indeed as to the future of Germany. It seemed to Pauli that what German princes and the German people needed was the spirit of the English Alfred; and to commend that great soul to their attention he wrote his book.

[1] This is in the Somerset dialect.

Twenty years later, Thomas Hughes wrote the life of Alfred with which most of us, perhaps, have been most familiar. His work, he said, remembering Pauli's word, was the work of "an Englishman for Englishmen." It was at a juncture in European politics which seemed likely to prove as serious as that of 1848 — the eve of the Franco-German war. Events had "forced on those who think on such subjects at all, the practical need of examining once more the principles upon which society and the life of nations rest." The hollowness of imperialism, as exhibited under Louis Napoleon in France, had become obvious to all earnest men. How was democracy to be kept strong and righteous? How is righteousness to be the sovereign power among the nations, "alike those who have visible kings and those who are without them?" With this question and this anxiety, Mr. Hughes addressed himself to the study of the spirit which controlled Alfred the Great a thousand years ago.

Thirty years more passed; and the Alfred millennial found the world at a far more important juncture in its politics than that of 1848 or 1869. It was a critical juncture especially for the Anglo-Saxon race. In both its branches it found itself engaged in wars of conquest and policies of imperialism opposed to the teachings and example of Alfred and of Washington. It was a fatal coincidence, which seems not less than providential, by which at such a time the whole Anglo-Saxon world was called back, on this thousandth anniversary, to sit at the feet of the great Anglo-Saxon man and learn of him. For Alfred belongs to all Anglo-Saxondom alike. "Alfred's name," says Frederic Harrison, writing for England, "is almost the only one in the long roll of our national worthies which awakens no bitter, no jealous thought, which combines the honor of all. . . . Neither Welshman, nor Scot, nor Irishman can feel that Alfred's memory has left the trace of a wound for his national pride. No difference of church arises to separate

any who would join to do Alfred honor." Not only representative of all phases of the life of England, but representative of our race — " call him," as Besant says, "Anglo-Saxon, call him Englishman, call him American." For he is our political ancestor as he is theirs. He belongs to New England, to America, as he belongs to Old England; and for America as for England is the lesson of his life. "Alfred," says Harrison again, "was a victorious warrior whose victories have left no curses behind them." In an age of war and conquest, he never waged a war save a war of defence. Never before had victories and successes such as his failed to beget the lust for territorial aggrandizement and campaigns of aggression. "He is the first instance in the history of Christendom," says Green, "of the Christian king, of a ruler who put aside every personal aim or ambition to devote himself to the welfare of those whom he ruled. So long as he lived he strove 'to live worthily'; but in his mouth a life of worthiness meant a life of justice, temperance, self-sacrifice. The Peace of Wedmore at once marked the temper of the man. . . . He set aside at thirty-one the dream of conquest, to leave behind him the memory not of victories but of 'good works,' of daily toils by which he secured peace, good government, education for his people. His policy was one of peace."

Peace, organization, civility,— peace in England, peace on earth,— the good government, the education and the welfare of the people, the world's order and progress, the constructive way,— that is the lesson of the Alfred millennial for the Anglo-Saxon world.

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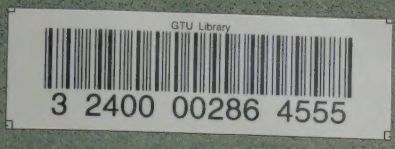

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